

JUST WAR THEORY AND PRESIDENTIAL DISCOURSE PRIOR TO CONFLICT

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

JUST WAR THEORY AND PRESIDENTIAL DISCOURSE PRIOR TO CONFLICT by LTC Bradley M. Fisher, US Army, 61 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine how national interest, national security interest, and the jus ad bellum principles of the just war tradition factor into the rhetoric of US presidents in their national addresses prior to US intervention and war. The method used in this monograph is a structured focused comparison utilizing seven research questions applied to five case studies from 1983 to 2013 and spanning five different US presidential administrations. The monograph contains analyses of the arguments of five different US presidents in their national addresses prior to US military action in Grenada, The Gulf War, Bosnia, and The Iraq War. The monograph utilizes Syria as a least likely case due to the fact that US military ground forces did not intervene there. The monograph finds that from 1983 to the present, the lexicon of the just war tradition's jus ad bellum principles has increasingly been used by US presidents to justify military intervention and war worldwide. The monograph finds that the least likely case, Syria, actually presents the strongest national interest, national security interest, and jus ad bellum arguments for intervention when no intervention took place. The monograph's thesis, that just war theory provides a convenient means for US presidents to justify armed conflict and intervention in the absence of true national security threats is partly supported, with national interest and national security interest arguments having a larger role in Presidential discourse prior to conflict than the author originally anticipated.

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Introduction

Over a decade of US conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq has caused many both inside and exterior to military and government circles to frequently revisit the reasons the United States went to war. The 1999 movie *Three Kings* features a small group of soldiers in the desert who see an armed individual approaching them from some distance away. This scene and the soldier's question "Are we shootin' people or what?" is poignant.¹ If anyone should know why he has been sent away from his home and family, his purpose for being there, and how he should be going about it, it is the soldier on the ground, the one most at risk once the decision for war or armed intervention is made.

There is a tension that consistently surfaces when the United States resorts to armed intervention or war. The tension is between the reasons given to justify the use of US force to both American citizens and the world. Whether those reasons cite national interests, national security interests, or principles of Just War Theory, there is an ensuing difficulty for military planners and commanders to determine why they are being sent and what they are supposed to accomplish. Ambiguity, loose correlations, or even changing rhetoric over time can lead to the most powerful military in the world performing admirably but failing to meet strategic objectives in the end. This study contends that from Grenada to Syria, in the absence of true national security threats, US presidents have used the principles of Just War Theory in varying degrees to justify US military intervention and war to the American public and the world.

The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons given by US presidents prior to US military intervention and war during the last five administrations. A review of the literature suggests that a comprehensive examination of this sort has not yet been conducted and may yield new insights into correlations between presidential discourse and military performance and

¹*Three Kings*, directed by David Russell (Warner Brothers, 1999), DVD 2009.

execution. This study, in showing what was said by US presidents in the past, could give way to a better awareness and dialogue between the civilian command authority and military leaders prior to the decision to commit US forces in support of policy objectives worldwide.

This study is significant because the reasons why the United States enters conflict guide the actions of military leaders and by extension, the operational planners within the military that design the military actions to accomplish the national strategic objectives. Discord between the reasons for war or intervention in the first place and the actions taken by the military in the conduct of it can lead to a failure in achieving the original purpose. Lack of clarity, loose justifications, and ambiguous objectives from the civilian command authority can create a vacuum in which military commanders will conduct their own analyses of the problem and may embark on a course that is no longer congruous with the original presidential intent. The use of primarily moral arguments to justify war and armed intervention and not clearly defined national interests or national security interests could create challenges for military professionals and necessitate a close dialogue between the civilian and military leadership.

There are five terms that will be used throughout this study. All are principles of Just War Theory as discussed in David Fisher's book *Morality in War*, and will be covered in depth later. By means of introduction, the terms are *competent authority*, *just cause*, *right intention*, *last resort*, and *proportion*. *Competent authority*, using Fisher's explanation, is in the modern era a bit of a sliding scale determination, taking into account international consensus and the gravity of the particular crisis or situation to be averted. As an initial orientation, *just cause* refers to the idea that wars should only be embarked upon for the right reason, self defense being the most commonly cited example of *just cause*. As Fisher points out, the terms *just cause* and *right intention* mutually reinforce each other. *Right intention* invokes doing the right thing for the right reasons, thereby giving the just cause a moral justification and ruling out ulterior motives. A *last resort* determination answers the question of whether or not all other persuasive means available

have been exhausted and war is the only remaining recourse. Lastly, *proportion* is a value judgement, in that the harm caused from war should be less than the good to come from the resolution of the conflict.²

The theoretical basis for this study is Just War Theory. Just War Theory or the just war tradition as Fisher describes it, involves the principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. The former referring to the tests that must be satisfied prior to entering into war and the latter the tests to determine if the war is conducted justly. For a war to be considered just, it must pass the tests presented by both of these principles. Both Fisher and Michael Walzer cite the two latin conventions, some critics of Walzer argue with what they consider his point of departure in that all aggression is a crime. For the purposes of this study, we will limit our analysis to the principles as commonly accepted and described in Fisher's work and not enter the debate over the Middle Age, Modern, or Theological interpretations of whether or not war, or aggression, is itself a crime or not.

Three hypotheses direct this study. The first and second are closely related and the third introduces a nuance aimed more directly at the thesis. The first hypothesis is US wars and interventions are justified by national interest. The second is US wars and interventions are justified by national security interest. Whether the United States is acting in its general interest or in its security interest should be a distinction that can bear fruit in analysis. The last hypothesis is Just War Theory provides US presidents with a convenient means to justify war and armed intervention.

Seven questions will be used to gather the empirical evidence to test these hypotheses by applying them to case studies of US war and intervention from Grenada to Syria. The first two questions are directly related to the first two hypotheses and for each case study we will ask what

² David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66-73.

national interests and national security interests were used as justification by the president. The remaining five questions relate to the principles of Just War Theory introduced above. In each case, we will ask what the competent authority, just cause, and the right intention were, whether or not last resort was invoked, and finally if the harm from war was judged not disproportionate to the good achieved. All of these questions will be answered using the words of US presidents in their public addresses prior to conflict.

In this study, due to the limitation of space, the conflicts in the case study portion will not be discussed in depth. It is expected that the reader has an understanding of the conflicts discussed or will use other sources to expand their understanding. A second limitation in this study will be a reliance on publicly accessible information from presidential libraries and other sources. This study is delimited to US conflicts, from a US perspective, spanning Grenada to Syria. Only the statements of the US presidents will be used to answer the research questions. Subsequent analysis, theory, or arguments on US justification for a particular war or intervention by scholars, critics, or the media will not be used.

To conduct this study, it is necessary to make three assumptions. First, Just War Theory is and will remain important in the discussion about armed conflict and intervention for the foreseeable future. Second, presidential rhetoric prior to conflict reflects the national interests, national security interests, and justifications for US military intervention and war. Lastly, and related to the second assumption, we assume that there is not a secondary dialogue, one not communicated to the American people, that gives an alternate set of justifications for the use of US military force.

This study is organized into six sections. The introduction is followed by a literature review and presentation of the methodology that will be used to evaluate selected case studies. Next, the case studies, comprising the bulk of the text, will be introduced in chronological order. The fifth section contains my findings and analysis resulting from the case studies. Finally, the

last section is the conclusion of the study, where I will summarize the key points made, reinforce the necessary linkages of use to the reader, and point to areas where more research can be of value in the study of the topic.

Literature Review

The just war tradition, with origins dating back to Roman law, does not suffer, as a subject, from a lack of research, debate, or discussion of its evolution over time or its consistent influence over how governments, international organizations, and commentators place a moral judgement on the use of armed force in the present day. In the introduction to the tenth volume, number three of the 2011 *Journal of Military Ethics*, Davis Brown notes that “[i]t has taken fifty years for the just war tradition to transcend its religious studies roots and enter the domains of international relations, international law, and political theory...”³ The attention from scholars in these various fields has led to a large body of work that seems to follow some general trends. Recent work speaks to recommended modifications of the principles to better account for humanitarian intervention, the pre-emptive use of force, and other topics reflective of the complicated security environment of today. Another trend in the literature is to look at a particular conflict or military action and analyze it from a moral perspective using the just war tradition as a means of analysis. A third trend considers evolving technology such as cyber warfare or unmanned vehicles and uses the just war tradition as a means to debate the morality of using new technologies for the purpose of waging war. While the renewed academic interest in the just war tradition has led to nuanced approaches and proposed refinements to the general principles, by and large the main principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are accepted in the western world as the basis for passing moral judgement on the use of armed force today.

This section lays out the theoretical framework of Just War Theory, also referred to as the just war tradition using the works of Michael Walzer, David Fisher, and James Turner Johnson. The key concepts of *jus ad bellum* are explained using their writings as a guide and provide a brief survey of some recent literature and articles related to the just war tradition and US

³ Davis Brown, "Introduction: The Just War Tradition and the Continuing Challenges to World Public Order", *Journal of Military Ethics* 10, no. 3 (September 2011): 125-32, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15027570.2011.613161>.

presidents and conflicts. The section ends with a presentation of the three hypotheses used to test the thesis in this study and a summary.

Theoretical Framework

Michael Walzer's work *Just and Unjust Wars* is a discussion of morality in war, and in it he looks at different conflicts and events in time and examines the moral issues involved. Walzer is credited with reviving the just war tradition and it is difficult to read anything on the subject of justice in war where Walzer is not referenced at some point. In *Just and Unjust Wars*, Walzer acknowledges the intellectual difficulty in trying to assess moral judgement when *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are 'logically independent.' He succinctly summarizes the challenge in stating "[i]t is perfectly possible for a just war to be fought unjustly and for an unjust war to be fought in strict accordance with the rules."⁴ This dualism, according to Walzer, makes his purpose of 'seeing war whole' problematic. He believes that in examining the justifications and judgements surrounding our own conduct and the conduct of others, that "they reveal ... a comprehensive view of war as a human activity and a more or less systematic moral doctrine, which sometimes, but not always, overlaps with established legal doctrine."⁵ The 'legalist paradigm' presented by Walzer and the 'domestic analogy' bring a distinct internationalism to the discussion of morality and armed conflict. The paradigm and analogy liken nations to members of a society, each with certain rights, and invokes the idea that a collective of states could come to the aid of another if its fundamental rights (life, liberty, territorial integrity, sovereignty) were being threatened. While this study is not specifically framed to speak to this point, we will see reflections of this idea in the rhetoric of American presidents later on.

David Fisher's *Morality and War* is another work that speaks to just war thinking, the philosophical challenges involved, and the realities of contemporary security issues. Fisher

⁴ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2006, 2006), 21.

⁵ Ibid., xxi.

contends that from the early days of the just war tradition up to and including the Cold War, most of the thought and discourse was geared towards the rulers of states and policy makers. He notes that with the fall of the Soviet Union, the nature of the modern security environment, and the secularization of society, the just war tradition should be modernized and its principles revisited in a format that serves not just governmental leaders and policy makers, but the military members conducting operations as well. In addition to re-emphasizing the traditional principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, Fisher discusses how the use of Aristotelian virtue ethics could serve to help provide practical guidance and instruction for a new secular age, where recruits coming into the services do not necessarily have the same moral instructional framework provided by religious practice in the past.⁶ The ethical framework proposed by Fisher, virtuous consequentialism, “includes both the internal qualities and external consequences of our actions, as well as the principles that guide those actions and the virtues needed to enact the principles in our daily lives.”⁷ The principles of just war as he describes them will be used in this study as a means to evaluate US presidential rhetoric prior to conflict. “With the ending of the Cold War, the nuclear debate has subsided, but interest in the tradition continues, with even politicians adopting some of the language, if not the substance, of just war teaching.”⁸ This acknowledgement by Fisher begs the questions of how and to what extent the tradition is surfacing in presidential rhetoric, both of which will be answered in answering the research questions that frame this study.

A third notable commentator on the just war tradition is James Turner Johnson. According to Johnson, the just war tradition “is, as a whole, a repository of the way in which Western culture has come to think of the values which political life exists to support, protect, and

⁶ David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸ Ibid., 65.

foster; the role of military force in the service of those values; and the limits on the use of such force.”⁹ In contrast with Fisher, Johnson separates the *jus ad bellum* criteria into the categories of deontological and prudential. “He argues that the deontological criteria are the ‘requirements found in classic just war thought’ while the prudential are ‘at best supportive concerns having to do with the wise practice of government.’”¹⁰ As Nahed Zehr points out, this separation of the criteria is a recent (1999) development, and also, even within the separation, the ordering of the criteria has undergone some modification over time in Johnson’s work. While a discussion about the ordering and sub-categorization of the just war criteria is outside the scope of this study, Johnson’s contention that just war reasoning may be warped through incorrect prioritization is worth mention. In arguing for constancy in the tradition, Johnson states that “[t]he just war idea is not free-floating, to be given whatever content one may think appropriate in whatever context.”¹¹ As noted above, Fisher contends that politicians and policy makers have used the language of the just war tradition over time to justify their actions. Keeping mindful of what criteria are emphasized in presidential rhetoric prior to war may help to determine if US presidents pick and choose what criteria they speak to, or if there is some consistency in rhetoric over time.

Key Concepts

There are five key concepts or terms that form the basis for much of the case study analysis later in this study. When it comes to *just cause*, the most common explanations involve self-defense, but as Fisher points out, there can be cases where both sides feel they have justice

⁹ James Turner Johnson, *Morality and Contemporary Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 51.

¹⁰ Nahed Artoul Zehr, “James Turner Johnson and the ‘Classic’ Just War Tradition”, *Journal of Military Ethics* 8, no. 3 (September 2009): 190-201, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15027570903230216>.

¹¹ James Turner Johnson, *The War to Oust Saddam Hussein: Just War and the New Face of Conflict* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 35.

on their side.¹² In addition to self-defense, using the legalist paradigm offered by Walzer, countering aggression is also generally acceptable as a reason to wage war. The 1991 US operation to liberate Kuwait was seen as just in that it countered the aggression of Iraq. The protection of human life and defending basic human rights are also commonly accepted examples of just cause for declaring war or taking armed action. The loss of life and the enormous impacts of war have, over time, kept the definitions and accepted causes fairly narrow in scope.

The purpose of *right intention* as a criterion is to rule out selfish or ulterior motives for declaring war. Right intention is inextricably linked to the just cause and rules out things like territorial expansion and purely economic gain for example. Fisher states that “[r]ight intention is the intention to rectify the wrong specified in the just cause.”¹³ Motives of greed or cruelty are inadmissible because they cannot be linked to the just cause. Right intention opens itself up to debate when there are multiple possible benefits from or motives for taking action. A humanitarian intervention for example to a country known for rich mineral deposits could be construed as being disingenuous. In cases of multiple possible motives, Fisher explains that “what counts is the dominant intention, which needs to be determined by the just cause.”¹⁴

Competent authority as a criterion in the tradition originated in response to the private wars of the Middle Ages. Johnson uses the terms *proper authority* and *sovereign authority*. Over time, competent authority came to mean a legitimate government. In the present day, authorization by the UN or at least international consensus seem to be the ideal but can be problematic. The UN is an imperfect organization and some just war thinkers believe that the definition should remain more state-centric. As G.R. Lucas points out, “[t]he embarrassing truth is that the phrase ‘the international community’ in fact is little more than a favored rhetorical

¹² David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 68-69.

¹³ David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 72.

¹⁴ Ibid.

device that, at present, names nothing.”¹⁵ For the purposes of this study, when discussing competent authority, both the legitimate government, in this case the United States, and the prevailing opinion of international consensus will factor in the analysis.

Last resort takes the immense suffering and destruction caused by war into account and requires that war only be resorted to when other means have either proven ineffective or are not likely to succeed. Fisher distinguishes between a temporal and logical characterization of last resort in explaining that the just war tradition does not specify that all other options must be tried and fail before war can be declared. Johnson considers last resort one of the prudential criteria and Davis Brown categorizes it as a secondary criterion, adding that “it is usually invoked in arguments *against* the legitimacy of particular armed conflicts, rarely in favor of it.”¹⁶ Regardless of the perceived strength or weakness or hierarchical stature of last resort in the just war tradition, as a theme it is often cited in presidential rhetoric and therefore bears on this study.¹⁷

The final term to be discussed is *proportion*. Proportion, like right intention, is related to the just cause. The good to be achieved by a particular action must be linked to the just cause, and “an important constraint is that the politician is not free to specify whatever goods he likes.”¹⁸ Fisher breaks down proportion into its applicability both in *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, but regardless of whether talking about entry into conflict or conduct during conflict, the overall premise is that the good to be achieved cannot be disproportionate to the harm caused. Gary

¹⁵ George R. Lucas, “The Role of the ‘International Community’ in Just War Tradition--Confronting the Challenges of Humanitarian Intervention and Preemptive War”, *Journal of Military Ethics* 2, no. 2 (August 2003): 122-44, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15027570310000261>.

¹⁶ Davis Brown, “Introduction: The Just War Tradition and the Continuing Challenges to World Public Order”, *Journal of Military Ethics* 10, no. 3 (September 2011): 125-32, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15027570.2011.613161>.

¹⁷ In the preface to his book, *The Case for Combat*, Edward J. Lordan lists last resort as a theme, among others, that has been used to persuade Americans to enter conflicts from the American Revolution to the present day.

¹⁸ David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75.

Brown provides a good definition: “Proportionality involves considering all the evil resulting from a war, and weighing it against the good that will occur or the harm that will be avoided.”¹⁹

Empirical Research on the Topic

This paper studies the public statements of US presidents to ascertain justifications for war or armed intervention. Edward J. Lordan used a similar approach in his book *The Case for Combat: How Presidents Persuade Americans to go to War*. In it, he examines presidential messaging and the techniques used to persuade Americans to go to war. The themes used in presidential messaging include, according to Lordan, “self-protection, the enemy as the aggressor, Just War Theory, moral superiority, the inevitability of conflict, and guaranteed victory.”²⁰ Using these themes, and through analysis of case studies of ten conflicts from the War of 1812 to the War on Terror, Lordan concludes that American presidents generally use the same four messages of reacting to provocation, acting morally, responding proportionally, and the in-disputability of both the need to fight and the positive outcome.²¹ Lordan’s approach takes into consideration the events leading up to each conflict, and follows the trace of messages used first to plant the seed for war and ultimately deliver the presidential war message. Just war theory is one of many tools used by Lordan to analyze presidential rhetoric, and his cases involve only “major” wars fought by the United States.

A survey of the *New York Times* article archive did not reveal any articles related to presidential speeches and just war for US operations in Grenada, Libya, and Panama. The first article to surface was in reference to the 1991 Gulf War. The article, written by Peter Steinfels, spoke to the opposition of Church leaders to the war. In that article, there is mention of a recent

¹⁹ Gary D. Brown, "Proportionality and Just War", *Journal of Military Ethics* 2, no. 3 (November 2003): 171-85, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15027570310000667>.

²⁰ Edward J. Lordan, *The Case for Combat: How Presidents Persuade Americans to Go to War* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010), 11.

²¹ Edward J. Lordan, *The Case for Combat: How Presidents Persuade Americans to Go to War* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010), 292.

speech by then President George H.W. Bush that, according to the National Association of Evangelicals director of public affairs, Robert P. Dugan Jr., presented a "clear and compelling case that the war against Iraq does meet the just-war criteria."²² While there may well be other articles that a more refined search could unearth with reference to the above conflicts, one clear observation is that the number of articles that reference just war spikes considerably starting with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The just war tradition as a whole and select criteria from it are widely used both in support and condemnation of US involvement in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

At the other end of the spectrum, in an online article for *Consortium News* entitled "Obama Distorts 'Just War' Principles," Daniel C. Maguire uses just war tradition criterion to criticize a speech made by President Obama in May 2013. Maguire contends that "[t]he President and most Americans need schooling on just what the "just war theory" (JWT) is."²³ While Maguire's explanations of the criteria are markedly different from those given by Fisher or Johnson, the article nonetheless challenges that President Obama is selectively using some of the criteria of Just War Theory, in this case to talk about the use of drone strikes, something that Johnson would agree violates the value of the tradition. The criteria are nested, logically flow, and must all be met, not selectively cited and used as buzz words. While the subject of drones and the time period of the article fall outside the scope of the cases studied in this work, the idea of the selective use of just war tradition criterion by US presidents in their speeches is revisited later in the case studies.

²² Peter Steinfels, "WAR IN THE GULF: The Home Front; Church Leaders Reaffirm Opposition to War", *NY Times*, 15 February, 1991, accessed 17 March, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/15/us/war-in-the-gulf-the-home-front-church-leaders-reaffirm-opposition-to-war.html?action=click&module=Search®ion=searchResults%230&version=&url=http%3A%2F%2Fquery.nytimes.com%2Fsearch%2Fsitesearch%2F%23%2FGulf%2BWar%2BJust%2BWAr%2F>

²³ Daniel Maguire, "Obama Distorts 'Just War' Principles", *Consortium News Online*, 24 May 2013, accessed 17 March 2014, <http://consortiumnews.com/2013/05/24/obama-distorts-just-war-principles/>

As we have seen in the literature, there is a gap that emerges in regard to the analysis of presidential rhetoric and the interplay between national interest, national security interest, and the just war tradition in how US presidents justify the decision for war or armed intervention. The just war thinkers predominantly look at a single event, act, or war and use the tradition to make a moral determination. Lordan cites Just War Theory as one of the themes found in presidential messaging and illustrates how it assists in making the “acting morally” argument that figures in the speeches of ten presidents, but does not mention national interest or national security interest as arguments used to sell the case for war to the American people. By looking at cases of both war and intervention of the last five presidents, this study expands on the work of Lordan and also fills a perceived gap in the analysis of the influence national and national security interests and the just war tradition have had on presidential rhetoric in speeches prior to conflict in the last thirty years. Thus three hypotheses are used to test this study's thesis. These hypotheses assert: 1) US wars and interventions are justified by national interest, 2) US wars and interventions are justified by national security interest, and 3) Just War Theory provides US presidents with a convenient means to justify war and armed intervention.

There are differences of opinion among notable commentators on the just war tradition over the definitions and ordering of the criteria that must be met in order to make a moral determination for a particular action. Part of the explanation for this lies with the evolving nature of warfare and attempts to keep the tradition relevant to new arrivals on the national security scene such as regime change and unmanned weapons. Recent commentary has criticized at least one president for not fully understanding the just war tradition and in 2003 former president Jimmy Carter criticized the invasion of Iraq in saying that “I became thoroughly familiar with the principles of a just war, and it is clear that a substantially unilateral attack on Iraq does not meet

these standards.”²⁴ Presidents are clearly aware of the just war tradition, but how they make use of it along with national and national security interests in their speeches to justify the use of force to the American public is what this study will attempt to address.

²⁴ Jimmy Carter, “Just War - or a Just war?”, *NY Times* Op-Ed, 9 March, 2003, accessed 18 March, 2014, <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/documents/doc1249.html>

Methodology

This study relies on case study methodology. The primary goal of this study is to test the research questions that relate to justifications of national interest, national security interest, or just war criteria for US war and intervention. Multiple cases are used because the evidence is delimited to presidential public addresses prior to US conflict. The use of a single case, while allowing for more depth of research, would limit the ability for analysis of trends over time. The timeframe of Grenada to Syria will allow cases to be selected from five different presidential administrations.

The cases to be used in this study span the presidencies of five American presidents. Ronald Reagan invaded the Caribbean nation of Grenada in 1983 in order to overthrow its socialist government. In 1991, George H.W. Bush led an international coalition to expel Iraq from Kuwait in the Gulf War. Under Bill Clinton, US airstrikes were authorized to prevent ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in 1994 and the United States later became part of a NATO peacekeeping force in the region. In 2003, George W. Bush authorized the invasion of Iraq to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein. Finally, in 2013, Barack Obama addressed the nation in regard to the possible use of force in Syria in response to the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime against the Syrian people.

The method of analysis is structured focused comparison as explained in the book *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett. In this study, the method is structured in that the same questions will be asked of each case study. By applying the same questions to each case, the data can be structured and form the basis for comparison between the findings. The method in this study is focused because only the justifications for war or intervention as given in presidential speeches is examined. For example, the wars and interventions themselves, how they were conducted, or public addresses by other government officials or commentators about the same wars and interventions will not be used.

Seven questions will be used to gather the empirical evidence to test the components of the working hypotheses by applying them to case studies of US war and intervention from Grenada to Syria. In analyzing presidential speeches prior to conflict, the first two questions applied will be whether or not the president cites national interest or national security interest in the speech. The determination is largely a yes or no, but a second element will be applied in order to determine a level of emphasis of each yes with a high, moderate, or low value. A high value reflects a dominant theme in the speech, a low value means national interest or national security interests are minimally mentioned, and a moderate value provides a measure between the two.

The remaining five questions relate to the criteria of the just war tradition. When looking for competent authority, we will look to see what authority the president is using to justify the military action. This authority could be a NATO or UN charter or resolution, approval from Congress, precedent, or an acknowledgement that the United States is operating unilaterally because it is the only nation capable of doing something. Presidents committing US forces to action say that the operation is just in a variety of ways. In making the just cause determination, we will look at what wrong the president says needs to be righted. In the classical sense, we expect to see explanation of a wrong that has been committed such as aggression, genocide, or the use of chemical weapons. To determine the right intention, we will see if it is explicitly specified, and this should furnish the reason or reasons why force is being used and be linked to the just cause. Here, we expect to see appeals to moral principles, the larger international order, global peace, or the end to human suffering. For last resort, we will examine how the president explains that the authorization for force was not the first option. Other actions the United States or world community took prior to resorting to armed conflict and what led to the decision that force was the only option for success are part of the examination. A common trend among presidents is to lay out how the United States has had no choice, or that others have forced our hand. Finally, for proportionality, how does each president account for the destruction and cost in blood and

treasure that the operation will require and explain how the good to be achieved from the operation justifies the cost. This question will most likely tease out some ideological differences among the different presidents but should factor into their rhetoric as a means of making the argument that the action is morally just. Discriminate targeting, measured response, how the United States will not specifically target civilians are all related to *jus in bello*, but they do factor into an overall assessment by the president in regard to ways the United States will limit the bad in order to achieve the greater good.

This section introduced the methodology of structured, focused comparison using multiple case studies of presidential speech prior to US conflict spanning five conflicts over five different presidential administrations. The conflicts vary from peace enforcement to the second longest war on record in the United States. By using only the speeches given by US presidents prior to military action and not analyzing the operations themselves, the scope of the study remains focused and manageable. Further, in using seven research questions applied to each case in order to test three main hypotheses regarding the justification of US wars and interventions, the study is structured and will enable the analysis of trends over time. Lastly, in using commonly accepted criteria from the just war tradition to help shape the research questions, we will be able to make a determination of whether presidential rhetoric prior to US conflict mirrors the guidelines the tradition advocates or selectively chooses certain criteria to bolster support for action.

Case Studies

Grenada - 1983

The United States invasion of Grenada will be the first of five cases in this study. This section will provide an introduction, justification of the case, and a brief overview. The speeches given by President Reagan on 25 and 27 October, 1983 will then provide answers to each of the seven research questions. The reason for using two speeches is because the 25 October speech was given the day US forces began the invasion. President Reagan addressed reporters from the briefing room in the White House on the 25th, and also gave a national address two days later on the 27th.²⁵ Following the answers to the research questions using the two speeches, as assessment of Just War Theory as it relates to the case and a summary will conclude the section.

Michael Walzer's book *Just and Unjust Wars* was first published in 1977 and as discussed earlier in the study, sparked renewed interest in the just war tradition. The United States deployment of forces to Grenada occurred six years later and therefore it is conceivable that some just war principles may be present in the presidential discourse. Grenada is a most likely case in that, based on the research questions, justification for the action should feature some elements of national interest, national security interest, and the just war principles. A case study from the 1800s for example would be a least likely case as the just war tradition didn't truly get widespread attention from military scholars and politicians until after the publication of Walzer's book in 1977.

On 25 October 1983, the United States conducted a joint amphibious and airborne assault of the island nation of Grenada in the Caribbean Sea. The island was originally a British

²⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica Announcing the Deployment of United States Forces in Grenada," 25 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102583a.htm> and Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada," 27 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102783b.htm>.

possession, gained its independence, and then after a 1979 coup, was ruled by a socialist regime under Maurice Bishop with ties to Cuba. On 19 October 1983, Bishop and his revolutionary court were assassinated and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States requested help from the United States in order to restore order. Complicating the situation were several hundred US citizens attending medical school on the island. The six-day campaign resulted in the restoration of order and the freeing of the American students at the price of nineteen service members' lives. While the operation was regarded a success for the Reagan administration, the Department of Defense and Special Operations Community were later criticized for poor intelligence, communication challenges, and mediocre Joint cooperation.²⁶

Structured Questions

What was the national security interest? In the 25 and 27 October speeches, President Reagan only uses the words “national security” in the 27 October speech, two days after the operation began. In that speech, President Reagan states three security specific facts in reference to Grenada. First, the airport that Bishop had built “looked suspiciously suitable for military aircraft, including Soviet-built long-range bombers.”²⁷ Second, Reagan states that the group that seized Bishop and put him under arrest were “more devoted to Castro’s Regime than he [Bishop] had been.”²⁸ Lastly, the president states that instead of an island paradise, Grenada was “a Soviet-Cuban Colony, being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy.”²⁹ Later in the speech, Reagan makes the point that the world has changed and “our

²⁶ Allan Reed Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607 to 2012*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2012), 886.

²⁷ Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada,” 27 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102783b.htm>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

national security can be threatened in faraway places.”³⁰ As the above citations show, the president outlines national security interests in the 27 October speech and therefore the question receives a yes determination. Since the 25 October speech does not mention any national security interests the question receives a moderate value on the scale of high, moderate, and low.

What was the national interest? National interest is not explicitly stated in either speech but the general tone and comments of both speeches largely speak to the protection of US citizens and the support of democratic institutions. In the 25 October speech, Reagan states that “American lives are at stake” and mentions that many of the nearly one thousand US citizens are “medical students and senior citizens.”³¹ The 27 October speech reveals an aspect of the Reagan ideology in that “I believe our government has a responsibility to go to the aid of its’ citizens, if their right to life and liberty is threatened.”³² Both speeches mention the restoration of order and democratic institutions in Grenada, as well as the proximity of Grenada to the United States. National interests and American ideals are mentioned in both speeches by President Reagan, thus the research question yields a yes answer with a high value.

What was the competent authority? The competent authority in Grenada was the formal request for assistance from five member nations of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the US right to protect its’ citizens. In the 25 October speech, Reagan states that the five member states, as well as two additional non-member states were unanimous in their request for US participation. The 27 October speech echoes the same request by the OECS and adds “three of them don’t have armies at all, and the others have very limited forces.”³³ Both speeches

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica Announcing the Deployment of United States Forces in Grenada,” 25 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102583a.htm>.

³² Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada,” 27 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102783b.htm>.

³³ Ibid.

also state that the proposal for action was based on a mutual assistance treaty that existed among the Caribbean nations. In the 27 October speech, the president specifically mentions the “legitimacy of their request” and “concern for our citizens” as the two factors that dictated his decision to commit US forces.³⁴

What was the just cause? The just cause, or wrong to be righted in Grenada, was the violent overthrow of the existing government by military coup. In Reagan’s words from 25 October, “a brutal group of leftist thugs violently seized power, killing the Prime Minister, three Cabinet members, two labor leaders, and other civilians, including children.”³⁵ An additional just cause, stemming from the lack of order and seizure of the airports by the coup, was the inability of American citizens to leave the island voluntarily. In the 27 October speech, Reagan states “[t]he nightmare of our hostages in Iran must never be repeated.”³⁶

What was the right intention? Right intentions are mentioned in the 25 October speech by way of the reasons the president gives for the action and the delineation of US objectives in Grenada. President Reagan outlines the protection of innocent lives, “forestall[ing] future chaos,” and restoring law, order, and government institutions among the reasons for action.³⁷ The objectives of “protecting our own citizens,” facilitating evacuation, and restoring democratic institutions round out the right intentions underlined in the speech.³⁸

Was last resort invoked? Last resort is invoked by President Reagan in the 25 October speech. In two instances the president states that “this collective action has been forced on us”

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica Announcing the Deployment of United States Forces in Grenada,” 25 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102583a.htm>.

³⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada,” 27 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102783b.htm>.

³⁷ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica Announcing the Deployment of United States Forces in Grenada,” 25 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102583a.htm>.

³⁸ Ibid.

and “I concluded the United States had no choice but to act strongly and decisively.”³⁹ The latter quote is preceded by two, albeit somewhat vague, actions the United States was pursuing prior to taking action. According to the president, the United States “consciously sought to calm fears” and “[was] determined not to make an already bad situation worse and increase the risks our citizens faced.”⁴⁰ In regard to the action being forced on the United States, Reagan states that the action was forced by events “that have no precedent in the eastern Caribbean and no place in any civilized society.”⁴¹ The idea of morality implied in this last quote could also apply to right intention but in the speech was linked to the explicit notion that the US’ hand was forced to action.

Was the harm from war judged not disproportionate to the good? This just war principle is not mentioned or intoned at all in the 25 October speech while the operation was just beginning. There is a nominal mention in the 27 October speech when President Reagan states “it should be noted that in all the planning, a top priority was to minimize risk, to avoid casualties to our own men and also the Grenadian forces as much as humanly possible.”⁴² Reagan goes on to say there were casualties, few in number, but “even one is a tragic price to pay.”⁴³

Assessment

In the Grenada case, none of what have come to be the commonly accepted just war tradition principles are explicitly mentioned. In looking at what, over time, have become the commonly used examples and justifications for the different principles in the tradition reveals that in the Grenada case, four of the five jus ad bellum principles outlined by David Fisher are

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica Announcing the Deployment of United States Forces in Grenada,” 25 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102583a.htm>.

⁴² Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada,” 27 October, 1983, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102783b.htm>.

⁴³ Ibid.

strongly supported. The fifth, proportionality, is touched upon but has far fewer linkages than the other four. This could be a result of the nature of the operation and size of the force involved compared with other US conflicts in history. In applying Just War Theory to the Grenada case using the words of the Commander in Chief, there are two areas that could yield some debate. First, in regard to competent authority, whether the OECS satisfies that criteria or whether the authority should have been the larger Organization of American States is one area that could be debated. Second, the just cause determination of a military coup that upset the security of the eastern Caribbean region sells well, but the fact that the Bishop regime had close ties to Cuba and the faction that deposed him was in the president's words "leftist," created a situation the United States could exploit to its advantage in facilitating the emplacement of a democracy in that state nonexistent since Bishop came to power in 1979.

Summary

In this first case, President Reagan, in his 25 and 27 October speeches about military action in Grenada, provides information relevant to all the research questions. Of note is the 25 October speech makes no mention of national security while it figures heavily into the 27 October discourse. While not using what has become in recent years the common terminology used in how US presidents justify military action to the public and the world, President Reagan specifically mentions national security interest in one speech (a Yes, moderate value), appeals to items of national interest such as the protection of US citizens in both speeches (a Yes, high value), and touches on four out of the five *jus ad bellum* principles outlined by Fisher. The next case is the 1991 invasion of Iraq, or Gulf War under President George H.W. Bush.

Gulf War - 1991

The second case study is the US and coalition invasion of Iraq in 1991. As in the other case, an introduction, justification, and overview will start the section, and then President Bush's address to the nation on January 16, 1991 will furnish the answers to the research questions.⁴⁴ The January speech marks the beginning of the ground war after months of US and coalition build up of forces in the region and the imposition of international sanctions against Iraq. An assessment of Just War Theory as it relates to the case will follow the answers to the research questions and a summary will conclude the section.

The invasion of Iraq is a most likely case for this study as it was the largest US force to be committed anywhere since the Vietnam War. The expectation is that the president would cite national interest, national security interest, and all of the just war principles in order to justify putting the lives of so many American service men and women at risk. Much of the literature on Just War Theory cites the Gulf War of 1991 as the quintessential example of just cause in modern times, therefore bolstering the selection of this case.

On 16 January, 1991 the United States began offensive military action against Iraqi forces in Kuwait and Iraq. The US-led coalition forces conducted a 38-day air campaign followed by a five-day ground campaign from 24-28 February, 1991. In all, twenty-four different nations participated in the coalition force whose objective was to restore the Kuwaiti regime that had been overthrown by an invasion of Iraqi forces under Saddam Hussein in August of 1990. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait sparked international condemnation, the United States immediately deployed forces to Saudi Arabia to protect that border, and the UN authorized sanctions and a naval blockade of Iraq. After months of attempted negotiations, coalition building by the Bush

⁴⁴ George H. W. Bush, "Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq," 16 January, 1991, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/George%20HW%20Bush%20-%20Iraq%20Invasion.pdf>.

administration, and persistent Iraqi refusal to withdraw its forces, the US-led coalition used military power to defeat the Iraqi armed forces and force Saddam Hussein to accept UN Resolutions 687 and 688 in April, 1991. The “100 hour war” resulted in 148 battle deaths for the United States and ninety-two for the coalition forces. The deployment of over 500,000 US and 254,000 coalition soldiers was the largest since Vietnam, and many in military and government circles saw the swift success of the operation as proof that the US military could fight a large scale, short duration conflict.⁴⁵

Structured Questions

What was the national security interest? Surprisingly, given the size of the US force committed to action in Iraq in 1991, in the transcribed text of President Bush’s address to the nation, the words “national security” do not appear at all. The president does not create any overt argument linking the action in Iraq to any US national security interest. The president states that “Saddam sought to add to the chemical weapons arsenal he now possesses, an infinitely more dangerous weapon of mass destruction — a nuclear weapon.”⁴⁶ The implication is obvious, that a nuclear armed aggressor in the middle east would be a danger to the world’s security interest, but to the American public, the audience for this address, the argument is not explicit. For these reasons, and for consistency in the study, the research question has to receive a no determination.

What was the national interest? National interest is also not explicitly mentioned in the president’s address. There are two instances where national interest is implied. First, Bush states that during the period leading up to his decision to begin military action, “more damage was being done to the fragile economies of the Third World, emerging democracies of Eastern

⁴⁵ Allan Reed Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607 to 2012*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2012), 903-914.

⁴⁶ George H. W. Bush, “Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq,” 16 January, 1991, accessed 24 February, 2014,
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/George%20HW%20Bush%20-%20Iraq%20Invasion.pdf>.

Europe, to the entire world, including our own economy.”⁴⁷ National interest is implied a second time when the president tells the nation of the historical significance of the moment. He states that the United States has an “opportunity to forge...a new world order — a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations.”⁴⁸ These two citations convey the idea that the United States is both affected by the current situation and has an opportunity to help shape the future environment, an environment where, post Cold War, the United Nations will a credible entity for peacekeeping. While far from a dominant theme in the discourse, the president does make a linkage between events and United States’ interests, therefore the research question receives a yes determination with a low value.

What was the competent authority? The competent authorities in this case were the United Nations and the United States Congress. President Bush speaks to the fact that Saddam Hussein repeatedly refused to comply with UN resolutions and that the US Congress took “resolute action” after “historic debate.”⁴⁹ The Congressional vote for military action in Iraq was 52-47 in the Senate and 250-183 in the House. While not a landslide vote, in this case the president had the approval of the international community and Congressional support.

What was the just cause? The just cause, or wrong to be righted in the Gulf War case was the aggressive behavior of Iraq in invading Kuwait. Right up front in the speech, President Bush states that “the dictator of Iraq invaded a small and helpless neighbor, Kuwait — a member of the Arab League and a member of the United Nations.”⁵⁰ Later in the discourse, as shown in the other cases, the president makes reference to the evil perpetrated by Saddam’s forces who “raped, pillaged, and plundered” and mentions that “among those maimed and murdered,

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ George H. W. Bush, “Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq,” 16 January, 1991, accessed 24 February, 2014,
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/George%20HW%20Bush%20-%20Iraq%20Invasion.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

innocent children.”⁵¹ Later in the speech, the president asserts that “no nation will be permitted to brutally assault its neighbor.”⁵² Just cause, again not explicitly stated in those terms, finds ample support in President Bush’s 16 January, 1991 address to the nation.

What was the right intention? Right intention arguments are numerous in the presidential address. When listing the objectives of the mission, President Bush mentions that “the legitimate government of Kuwait will be restored to its rightful place, and Kuwait will once again be free.”⁵³ Another objective outlined by the president is that once peace is restored, Iraq will also re-enter the fold, “thus enhancing the security and stability of the Gulf.”⁵⁴ The new world order and peacekeeping role of the United Nations mentioned above in the national interest discussion can also support right intention. The president also uses right intention arguments to counter potential critics of the action. First, to those who might accuse the United States of aggression, he states that “our goal is not the conquest of Iraq. It is the liberation of Kuwait.”⁵⁵ Second, to counter arguments that the United States was motivated by oil, the president uses the words of actual soldiers to convey ideas of freedom, countering lawlessness, and charting a course for a better future, the most explicit soldier comment stating “we’re here for more than just the price of a gallon of gas.”⁵⁶

Was last resort invoked? Like right intention, last resort arguments are also numerous in the relatively short presidential address. Early in the speech, President Bush mentions the diplomatic efforts of the United States, United Nations, Arab leaders, the US Secretary of State, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, all of which were unable to persuade Saddam

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ George H. W. Bush, “Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq,” 16 January, 1991, accessed 24 February, 2014,
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/George%20HW%20Bush%20-%20Iraq%20Invasion.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Hussein to withdraw his forces from Kuwait. The president goes on to say that “all reasonable efforts to reach a peaceful resolution” had been tried, and that the coalition countries “have no choice but to drive Saddam from Kuwait by force.”⁵⁷ Two more explicit last resort arguments appear in the case. The president addresses sanctions in saying that “though having some effect, showed no signs of accomplishing their objective.”⁵⁸ Finally, in using textbook last resort language, President Bush states that “[t]he United States, together with the United Nations, exhausted every means at our disposal to bring this crisis to a peaceful end.”⁵⁹

Was the harm from war judged not disproportionate to the good? The just war principle of proportion is best addressed in the Gulf War case when President Bush talks about his instructions to the military commanders. He says that he instructed them “to take every necessary step to prevail as quickly as possible.”⁶⁰ President Bush addresses those wary of another Vietnam scenario in saying that “our troops will not be asked to fight with one hand tied behind their back.”⁶¹ There is no specific mention of limiting civilian casualties as in other cases, President Bush instead says of the “innocents caught in this conflict, I pray for their safety.”⁶² The good to be achieved argument often used in discussions of proportion in the just war tradition, can, like already stated for right intention and national interest, find some support in the president’s description of the new world order. President Bush acknowledges the harm from war in his insistence to the commanders that the operation be conducted quickly, and the good to come from it is intoned in the comments about the better future world where nations do not act aggressively.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ George H. W. Bush, “Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq,” 16 January, 1991, accessed 24 February, 2014,
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/George%20HW%20Bush%20-%20Iraq%20Invasion.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Assessment

In applying Just War Theory to the Gulf War Case, all five of the jus ad bellum principles are supported by President Bush's address. The right intention and last resort arguments are the most robust, the competent authority argument is clear and unequivocal, and the just cause in this case is one often cited in the just war literature as exemplary. The proportion argument exists, but as in the Grenada case, it leans on protection of US and allied forces and makes no mention of how US military force will be discriminate. Given the planned month-long air campaign and the intent to utilize new precision weapons, the omission of the president to address the issue is most likely due to security concerns and the fact that the precision weapons in the US arsenal had not yet been tested in combat in 1991. The president's guidance for quick action and the clear explanation of the greater good to come from the conflict lend more weight to the proportion argument than seen in the Grenada case. While not utilizing what has come to be the lexicon of the modern just war tradition, President Bush makes a convincing jus ad bellum argument for US military action in the Gulf War during his 16 January, 1991 address to the nation.

Summary

The Gulf War case provides answers to all of the research questions. President Bush does not emphasize national security interest explicitly in this case and it is possible that other speeches during the initial build up of forces and execution of Operation Desert Shield may contain those linkages. However, this study is applying the research questions to the speeches given at the outset of offensive military action and therefore the 16 January, 1991 speech applies and the answer to the research question is no. The national interest research question is supported by the speech, but to a low degree. The jus ad bellum principles are all supported, with arguments for right intention and last resort permeating the entire discourse. The next case is the 1995 US military action in Bosnia under President Clinton.

Bosnia - 1995

The third case study is the commitment of US ground forces to Bosnia in 1995. As in the other cases, an introduction, justification, and overview will start the section, and then President Bill Clinton's address to the nation on November 27, 1995 will furnish the answers to the research questions. The United States had been involved in operations in Bosnia since 1992 on a very limited scale with air and naval forces. The November 27 speech by Clinton is important because it marks the moment when the United States sent more than a token ground force in support of the NATO mission in Bosnia. An assessment of Just War Theory as it relates to the case will follow the answers to the research questions and a summary will conclude the section.

Bosnia is a most likely case for this study because of the prevailing trends in US thought in 1995 and the reluctance of the United States, prior to that date, to commit any sizeable force to what many saw as a European problem. The expectation is that the president would argue compellingly using national interest, national security interest, and the just war principles to explain why 20,000 US troops would deploy in 1995 when they weren't justified in 1992.

The Bosnian War was one characterized by brutality and attempts at ethnic purification that had not been felt in Europe since World War II.⁶³ Bosnia-Herzegovina was a place where Serbians, Croatians, and Muslims lived in an uneasy peace during the best of times. In 1992, The UN Security Council authorized NATO to conduct a total arms embargo and emplace economic sanctions on Serbia in response to Serbian military action that had occupied 70 percent of Bosnia. The international humanitarian outcry over the conduct of Serbian forces and news coverage of the conflict also pressured the international community to take action. The UN Protective Force (UNPROFOR) was a token international ground force intended to help protect innocent lives, but

⁶³ Allan Reed Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607 to 2012*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2012), 937-942. For the overview, the majority of the basic facts presented about the Bosnian War were taken from *For the Common Defense*, additional footnotes are used for facts gathered from another source where applicable.

was hampered by restrictive rules of engagement and did little to curb the violence. In 1993, the United States provided humanitarian relief supplies to Bosnians using air assets. In 1994, the US Air Force conducted its first strikes against Serbian ground targets. President Clinton, frustrated with the continued march of Serbian forces to the north, withdrew US aircraft from the UNPROFOR in 1994. A NATO decision to conduct a limited offensive against the Bosnian Serbs eventually brought the United States into the war in a meaningful way. Between August and September of 1995, the USAF conducted 2,470 sorties against Serbian targets. On 21 November, 1995, the Dayton Peace Agreement was brokered by the United States and agreed to by the presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. The final peace settlement was signed in Paris on 14 December, 1995. US ground troops were sent to Bosnia in 1995 to become part of the international Implementation Force (IFOR), and the expectation was a one year mission. A ceremony in Tuzla on 24 November, 2004 officially marked the end of US participation in IFOR, thus ending a nine-year peacekeeping mission for US troops in Bosnia. The European Union took over the mission in December of the same year.⁶⁴

Structured Questions

What was the national security interest? In his 27 November speech to the nation, President Clinton specifically mentions national security in one instance and alludes to it in another. The president states that “[g]enerations of Americans have understood that Europe’s freedom and Europe’s stability is vital to our national security.”⁶⁵ The president continues and says that both World Wars, the Marshall Plan, and the creation of NATO were all undertaken by the United States because of this understanding. Earlier in the speech, Clinton asserts that “problems that start beyond our borders can quickly become problems within them” and then lists

⁶⁴ Associated Press, “US Troops Mark End of Mission in Bosnia”, *The Washington Post*, 25 November, 2004, accessed 26 April, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A11164-2004Nov24.html>.

⁶⁵ William J. Clinton, “Address on Bosnia,” 27 November, 1995, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3929>.

a variety of security threats that include: “organized forces of intolerance and destruction,” terrorism, and “the spread of organized crime and weapons of mass destruction and drug trafficking.”⁶⁶ While the president never clearly explains how the security threats mentioned could hurt the United States and how Bosnia was an important operation to prevent it, he nonetheless says that “[w]e’re all vulnerable” and speaks to a US leadership role in the post cold war “global village.”⁶⁷ The question receives a yes determination because of specific mention of national security interest and a low value due to other dominating themes in the speech.

What was the national interest? National interest is referenced more frequently by the president than national security interest in the speech. Early on, Clinton tells the nation that stability in Central Europe is “vital to our national interests.”⁶⁸ Later on, after listing a series of places where the United States had tried to stop or prevent war, the president states that “we have stood up for peace and freedom because it’s in our interest to do so and because it is the right thing to do.”⁶⁹ The dominant theme of the speech is the leadership role that the United States must assume in the post Cold War environment where “fragile new democracies” are threatened and where “America and America alone can and should make the difference for peace.”⁷⁰ A last example, related to the leadership role, is when President Clinton makes the argument that “America’s commitment to leadership will be questioned if we refuse to participate in implementing a peace agreement we brokered right here in the United States.”⁷¹ So, the national interests are stability in Central Europe, commitment to peace where possible, and asserting a leadership role generally and at the head of NATO in the post Cold War era. For the reasons outlined above, the research question receives a yes determination and high value.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ William J. Clinton, “Address on Bosnia,” 27 November, 1995, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3929>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

What was the competent authority? The competent authority for Bosnia, according to the president's speech, was that "the Presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia all asked us to participate."⁷² The Bosnia mission was to be a NATO led mission, and the United States was the leader of NATO. The president also states in the speech that "if the NATO plan meets with my approval I will immediately send it to Congress and request its support."⁷³ At the time of the speech however, the authority cited was the Dayton Peace Agreement, brokered by the United States, and the request by the leaders of the three warring states that the United States participate. There is no mention of the UN security council in the speech, but the mention of 25 other nations pledging support implies international acceptance.

What was the just cause? The wrong to be righted in Bosnia was, in Clinton's words, "the killing of innocent civilians, especially children."⁷⁴ The president also states that "[i]mplementing the agreement in Bosnia can end the terrible suffering of the people, the warfare, the mass executions, the ethnic cleansing, the campaigns of rape and terror."⁷⁵ A temporal challenge with this just cause is that the same conditions referred to by the president in this speech were present, acknowledged and commonly known in the world community starting in 1992. Critics of the Clinton administration have said of Bosnia that "casualty avoidance had postponed this strategic necessity by a decade at the cost of thousands of European lives, and the United States had been one of the appeasers."⁷⁶ The president mentions in his speech that when he took office he did not send American troops to fight in Bosnia because "the United States could not force peace on Bosnia's warring ethnic groups" but nevertheless, in 1995 IFOR was

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ William J. Clinton, "Address on Bosnia," 27 November, 1995, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3929>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Allan Reed Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607 to 2012*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 2012), 943.

intended to do exactly that.⁷⁷ The fundamental difference, in the president's view, was that the war in Bosnia had concluded with a US brokered peace agreement, and now the United States would take an active role in implementing that peace.

What was the right intention? The right intentions in this case were to support peace and freedom, ensure stability in Central Europe, and as the president succinctly states, it was “the right thing to do.”⁷⁸ Democracy in Central Europe would surely be a counter to any future Soviet re-emergence of power, but in this speech the president mentions the positive role of Russian partners in helping to secure the peace. In discussing the international humanitarian relief and reconstruction effort, the president lists the rebuilding of roads and schools, the reunification of “children with their parents and families with their homes,” and an environment for Bosnians to choose their own leaders, all acceptable right intentions in the modern just war tradition.⁷⁹

Was last resort invoked? Last resort was not invoked in President Clinton’s speech. There is no mention of the United States being forced to action or that circumstances gave the United States no choice. The president does however make the argument that NATO is the only force capable of doing the mission, and as the leader of NATO, the United States must be a part of the endeavor.⁸⁰ In this way, President Clinton indirectly implies that as a nation with a leadership role, the United States has no choice but to be part of the mission. Due to the nature of the mission, the subtlety of the argument, and the fact that the United States let the war go on for three years and the belligerents agree to a peace before US ground involvement, last resort does not factor into this case.

Was the harm from war judged not disproportionate to the good? In looking at President

⁷⁷ William J. Clinton, “Address on Bosnia,” 27 November, 1995, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3929>.

⁷⁸ William J. Clinton, “Address on Bosnia,” 27 November, 1995, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3929>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Clinton's speech, proportionality is addressed but in an unexpected way given the peace-keeping nature of the Bosnia mission. Instead of discussion about the discriminate use of force, or an assurance that US forces will make every effort to avoid civilian casualties, the president gives a warning to would be transgressors of the peace agreement. Clinton states that US forces will be "heavily armed and fully trained," will "respond with overwhelming force to any threat," and warns that in the event anyone takes on our troops, "[w]e will fight fire with fire and then some."⁸¹ The other common arguments over the greater good to be achieved, mentioned above in the right intention discussion, are also applicable to proportionality.

Assessment

The Bosnia case is unique in that the justifications given by President Clinton to the American people in his November 27, 1995 address to the nation support the commitment of US forces to enforce a peace in Bosnia, not take offensive military action as the previous two cases showed. Clinton does not specifically address any of the just ad bellum principles outlined by Fisher, but does make arguments that strongly support competent authority, just cause, and right intention. Last resort aspects are subtly implied, and the proportion justification largely speaks to risk to US forces and how those risks will be mitigated and dealt with. The discourse about the overwhelming US response to anyone who threatens US forces is not tailored, the president does not say Serbian forces for example, and leaves the issue open for interpretation. The arguments elsewhere in the speech about the importance of freedom, peace, and a stable Central Europe fall in line better with common discussions of proportionality, the good to be achieved, although the president never specifically mentions the term. For the reasons stated above, the assessment is that three of the five just war principles are strongly supported, last resort is weakly inferred, and proportionality comments are largely focused on force protection.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Summary

In this third case, President Clinton's address to the nation on Bosnia provides information relevant to all the research questions. There is heavy emphasis on national interest and national values, weaker emphasis on national security although it is specifically mentioned, and strong support for three of the five just war principles as they are commonly discussed and accepted in the tradition. The nature of the commitment of US ground forces to Bosnia, to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement, may account for negligible arguments of last resort and proportionality, but their lesser role in this case could yield some interesting data for analysis later in the study. The next case is the Iraq War in 2003 under President George W. Bush.

The Iraq War - 2003

The fourth case study is the 19 March, 2003 invasion of Iraq by US and coalition ground forces. Like the previous cases, this case study will start with an introduction, justification of the case, and an overview. President Bush's 17 March, 2003 televised address to the nation will provide the answers to the research questions. The 17 March address featured the final warning to Saddam Hussein that he and his sons needed to leave Iraq in 48 hours. On 19 March, after the deadline, President Bush gave a short address announcing the beginning of military action. The second address is a condensed version of the first and does not introduce significant new arguments relevant to this study. As in the other cases, an assessment of Just War Theory as it relates to the case will follow the answers to the research questions and a summary will conclude the section.⁸²

The Iraq War of 2003 is a most likely case for this study because the president committed US forces to action in Iraq while there were already US forces committed in Afghanistan. The decision to start a second conflict should logically be strongly justified by the Commander in Chief using all possible means. National security interest, national interest, and the just war principles should all figure into the discourse to justify to the American public and the world the necessity for action.

The War in Iraq has become one of the most controversial US military actions in recent years. On 19 March, 2003 the United States began striking military targets in Iraq with the intent of forcing Saddam Hussein from power. US forces advanced rapidly, gaining control of Baghdad on 9 April. Within a week, the cities of Kirkuk, Mosul, and Tikrit were also in US hands and President Bush declared an end to major combat on 1 May. The nature of the conflict changed with the development of an insurgency that led to increased demands for US troops, increased

⁸² George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation," 17 March, 2003, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/17/sprj.irq.bush.transcript/>.

scrutiny from the US and world community, and frequent re-examination of US goals and interests in Iraq. For eight years, US forces fought insurgent irregular and paramilitary forces and never discovered proof of the nuclear weapon program that provided the bulk of the US justification for the use of force in the first place. On 15 December, 2011 the Obama administration withdrew the last major combat units from Iraq and ended the conflict.

Structured Questions

What was the national security interest? The words “national security” appear once in President Bush’s address to the nation. However, the context of those words are in reference to the United States’ authority to assure its own national security and will be developed further in the discussion of competent authority below. National security arguments present themselves when President Bush mentions “the threat to our country,” says that the “danger is clear,” and warns the nation that “Saddam Hussein and his terrorist allies could choose the moment of deadly conflict when they are strongest.”⁸³ Unlike the other cases earlier in this study, President Bush enlarges national security interest to world security interest when he asserts “[t]he security of the world requires disarming Saddam Hussein now.”⁸⁴ For the reasons above, this research questions receives a yes determination with a moderate value because like in other previous cases, national security is not a dominant theme in the speech.

What was the national interest? National interest is never explicitly stated in the 17 March address to the nation. National values of peace, liberty, and freedom do surface, as well as a message of national responsibility. President Bush criticizes the United Nations Security council in saying that “[it] has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours.”⁸⁵ Also in the discussion of the council, the president states that “[t]hese governments share our

⁸³ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation ,” 17 March, 2003, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/17/sprj.irq.bush.transcript/>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it.”⁸⁶ The message conveyed by President Bush is that the United States has a responsibility to act in order to remove the threat, even if that means acting alone. In addition to removing the threat, the president explains that the United States “will work to advance liberty and peace in that region.”⁸⁷ While national interests distinct from national security interests as outlined above are not overtly stated, the arguments of US responsibility and appeals to US values render a yes determination with a low value for this research question.

What was the competent authority? Arguments of competent authority are both numerous and somewhat contradictory in President Bush’s 17 March address. First, the president states that “[t]he United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security.”⁸⁸ Then the president goes on to say that “the United States Congress voted overwhelmingly last year to support the use of force against Iraq.”⁸⁹ In regard to the international community, President Bush states that UN resolutions 678 and 687 from the early 90s are still in effect, and that “the United States and our allies are authorized to use force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.”⁹⁰ The president tells the nation and the world “[t]his is not a question of authority, it is a question of will.”⁹¹ President Bush then cites UN resolution 1441 which found Iraq “in material breach of its obligations” and vowed “serious consequences if Iraq did not fully and immediately disarm.”⁹² Finally, the president admits that “some permanent members of the Security Council have publicly announced that they will veto

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation ,” 17 March, 2003, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/17/sprj.irq.bush.transcript/>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

any resolution that compels the disarmament of Iraq.”⁹³ As the examples illustrate, the competent authorities cited by the president in this case are US sovereign authority, US congress, and the existing UN resolutions 678, 687, and 1441. Because the UN resolutions 678 and 687 were tied to weapons of mass destruction, and because the Security Council would not pass any resolution compelling the disarmament of Iraq, it is ultimately the US sovereign authority and authority of the US congress that President Bush uses to justify military action in Iraq.

What was the just cause? The just cause, or wrong to be righted in the Iraq case is problematic because it largely figures on preemption. In the traditional sense, President Bush essentially cites self defense as the just cause. The president says that the Iraq regime “has a history of reckless aggression” and tells the nation that “[i]ntelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.”⁹⁴ Unlike traditional just cause arguments of self defense however, this case is a preemptive self defense argument, as seen when President Bush states “[b]efore the day of horror can come, before it is too late to act, this danger will be removed.”⁹⁵ Military action based on preemptive self defense as a just cause argument, according to the just war tradition, would require an imminency of danger to be present. President Bush counters this in saying that “responding to such enemies only after they have struck first is not self defense, it is suicide.”⁹⁶ How imminent and plausible the threat of Saddam Hussein using weapons of mass destruction against the United States has led to much of the debate about the Iraq War.

What was the right intention? The right intentions outlined by President Bush support the themes of freeing the Iraqi people from a dictatorial regime, removing a threat to peace to the region and the world, and protecting American citizens. The president states that “we believe the

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation ,” 17 March, 2003, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/17/sprj.irq.bush.transcript/>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty,” and that the United States will help “build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free.”⁹⁷ The threat to regional and world peace, in the president’s words, is that “in one year, or five years, the power of Iraq to inflict harm on all free nations would be multiplied many times over.”⁹⁸ Finally, in addressing the protection of American citizens, the president states “[w]e choose to meet that threat now where it arises, before it can appear suddenly in our skies and cities.”⁹⁹ While the just cause as outlined by the president is self defense, the right intentions he links to it benefit not just the American people, but also the Iraqi people and the world.

Was last resort invoked? Like the other just war principles so far discussed, last resort arguments are also present in President Bush’s 17 March address to the nation. While never using the specific argument that the United States has been forced to act or has no choice, President Bush goes to some length in discussing all the means other than war that the United States and the international community attempted to use before resorting to armed action. The president cites “twelve years of diplomacy,” “more than a dozen resolutions in the United Nations Security Council,” how the United States “tried to work with the United Nations,” and in addressing the American people, President Bush states that they “can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war.”¹⁰⁰ As discussed in the key concepts earlier in this study, Fisher explains that the just war tradition does not specify that all other means must be tried and fail before a war can be declared.¹⁰¹ Following this logic, in fact, President Bush explains in detail how diplomacy with Iraq had failed and how the “Iraqi regime [had] used diplomacy as a ploy to gain time and

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation ,” 17 March, 2003, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/17/sprj.irq.bush.transcript/>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73.

advantage.”¹⁰²

Was the harm from war judged not disproportionate to the good? Proportion is specifically addressed by President Bush when he says that “the only way to reduce the harm and duration of war is to apply the full force and might of our military, and we are prepared to do so.”¹⁰³ Here the president explicitly acknowledges the harm caused by war. In addressing the Iraqi people, President Bush is clear to state that the military campaign “will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you.”¹⁰⁴ Finally, in addressing the Iraqi forces themselves, President Bush advises they will be given “clear instructions on actions they can take to avoid being attacked and destroyed.”¹⁰⁵ The good to come from the war, as outlined in the other answers above, is a free, prosperous, and peaceful Iraq that cannot threaten regional or world security.

Assessment

In applying Just War Theory to the 2003 Iraq War case, all five of the *jus ad bellum* principles are supported by President Bush’s address. The competent authority and just cause arguments are not as clean as in other cases, but both feature some of the common justifications allowed. The preemptive nature of the military action in this case has caused a lot of debate, and the failure of US forces to locate any weapons of mass destruction after invading further incited criticism of the action. The competent authority argument is also unique in this case as President Bush acknowledges the desire for a UN Security Council resolution but indicates frustration at the inability to acquire one. On one hand the president is supporting the role of the United Nations but also undermining it by taking unilateral action without a resolution to use force. Right

¹⁰² George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation ,” 17 March, 2003, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/17/sprj.irq.bush.transcript/>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation ,” 17 March, 2003, accessed 24 February, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/17/sprj.irq.bush.transcript/>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

intention, last resort, and proportion are all adequately addressed and this case marks the first overt acknowledgement and terminology of the harm caused by war.

Summary

The 2003 Iraq War case provides answers to all the research questions. National security interest and national interest are both indicated in the 19 March, 2003 address to the nation, with national security interest being more fully developed. The five just war principles are all supported in some way, however the competent authority and just cause arguments are somewhat problematic and largely open to interpretation. President Bush's desire to make a robust argument for competent authority actually introduces some confusion to the issue, and the preemptive nature of the action will continue to spark debate over the imminence of the threat. The last case is the 2013 address to the nation on Syria given by President Barack Obama.

Syria - 2013

The last case study is the United States inaction in Syria in 2013. Like the previous cases, an introduction, justification of the case, and overview will begin the section and then President Barack Obama's September 10, 2013 address to the nation on Syria will provide answers to the research questions.¹⁰⁶ An assessment of Just War Theory as it relates to the case will follow the answers to the research questions and a summary will conclude the section.

The Syria case is the only least likely case in this study. It is a least likely case because the United States did not send ground forces to Syria. The expectation is that the president would use national interest, national security interest, and the just war principles to justify not sending US military forces to Syria. Given the decision not to send forces, the expectation is that events in Syria would be explained by the Commander in Chief as not bearing on the national security interest or national interest of the United States. The just war principles, used most often to justify action vice inaction, could provide a medium for the president to show that the use of US military force is not justified in the Syria case.

In 2013 the United States considered using targeted military strikes against the Assad regime in Syria with the primary justification being Assad's use of chemical weapons against his own people. Civil war started in Syria in 2011 when protests against the government resulted in large scale government reprisals that targeted civilians, children, and combatants alike. The protesters took up arms, and many different anti-government rebel groups formed to challenge the strength of the Assad regime. The ethnic and religious composition of Syria is such that rebel groups are divided and at times fight each other as well as the forces of Assad's Regime. In 2013, reports and images of civilian victims of a Sarin gas attack spurred a US debate over the use of targeted military strikes in order to punish the Assad regime for the use of chemical weapons. In

¹⁰⁶ Barack Obama, "Address to the Nation on Syria," 10 September, 2013, accessed 18 March, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

order to avert the strikes, the Assad regime agreed to remove its stockpiles of chemical weapons under the supervision of the international community. In 2014, the Syrian civil war still continues and the chemical weapons have not yet been completely removed in part due to the violence.¹⁰⁷

Structured Questions

What was the national security interest? The national security interest, according to President Obama's 10 September, 2013 address to the nation, was the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime. The president specifically addresses why it is a danger to US security, and explains to the nation that failure to act could lead to erosion of the ban on chemical weapons, and that "other tyrants will have no reason to think twice about acquiring poison gas."¹⁰⁸ The president in this case specifically states that "I determined that it is in the national security interests of the United States to respond to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons through a targeted military strike."¹⁰⁹ Interesting in this case is that President Obama gives the clearest explicit statement of national security interest of any of the cases in this study and his address is about how the United States is not going to take military action in Syria, at least at the time he gave it. The president's justification for not ordering the strike was that, in his words "in the absence of a direct or imminent threat to our security," he decided to "take this debate to Congress."¹¹⁰ The research question receives a yes determination with a high value.

What was the national interest? Unlike national security interest, President Obama is not explicit when talking about national interest in the 10 September, 2013 address. He appeals to American values and says that the majority of Syrian people "just want to live in peace, with

¹⁰⁷ Associated Press, "Syrian uprising timeline of key events," *Politico*, September 4, 2013, accessed June 4, 2014, <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/syria-timeline-96270.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Barack Obama, "Address to the Nation on Syria," 10 September, 2013, accessed 18 March, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

dignity and freedom.”¹¹¹ President Obama also discusses the role of the United States in the world community as an argument in favor of national interest for action. He states that “for nearly seven decades, the United States has been the anchor of global security” and continues with “[t]his has meant more than forging international agreements — it has meant enforcing them.”¹¹² The reputation of the United States, according to President Obama, is also on the line, and he makes that point with the question “[w]hat kind of world will we live in if the United States of America sees a dictator brazenly violate international law with poison gas, and we choose to look the other way?”¹¹³ Finally, in linking American values to national interest, the president states that “our ideals and principles, as well as our national security, are at stake in Syria.”¹¹⁴ In other words, our national interest and national security interest are at stake in Syria. For the reasons listed above, this research question also receives a yes determination with a high value.

What was the competent authority? The competent authority in the Syria case is the United States Senate and the international community with regard to chemical weapons. President Obama states that “in 1997, The United States Senate overwhelmingly approved an international agreement prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, now joined by 189 governments that represent 98 percent of humanity.”¹¹⁵ The commonly sought authority of a UN Security Council resolution is complicated in the Syria case due to strong ties between Moscow and the Assad Regime. However, President Obama indicates in the address that he had “constructive talks” with President Putin, and that along with other Allies like Britain and France the goal would be to “work together in consultation with Russia and China to put forward a resolution at the UN

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Barack Obama, “Address to the Nation on Syria,” 10 September, 2013, accessed 18 March, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Security Council requiring Assad to give up his chemical weapons.”¹¹⁶ The world community was united in its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, but distaste for their use does not directly translate to authority for action. The authority for US military action in the Syria case is the president’s determination that a strike is in the national security interests of the United States. As stated above in the discussion of national security interests, in this case the president decided that although he had the authority, he would take the debate to Congress.

What was the just cause? The just cause, or wrong to be righted in the Syria case, was the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime. This case is also the first in this study where the president specifically mentions just cause, albeit inverted. When addressing the Congressional right, the president asks them to “reconcile your commitment to America’s military might with a failure to act when a cause is so plainly just.”¹¹⁷ The president is clearly indicating that there is a just cause and uses the actual words, but paradoxically uses them in explaining why no action will be taken for the moment. In concluding his address, there is a second use of the lexicon of the just war tradition principle of just cause when the president tells the nation that “[t]errible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong.”¹¹⁸ These two examples clearly indicate that President Obama was familiar with both the principle of just cause and the lexicon commonly used to explain it, even if not taking action.

What was the right intention? The right intention in the Syria case, like others, is spelled out in President Obama’s explanation of the purpose of a military strike against the Assad regime. The president states that “[t]he purpose of this strike would be to deter Assad from using chemical weapons, to degrade his regime’s ability to use them, and to make clear to the world

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Barack Obama, “Address to the Nation on Syria,” 10 September, 2013, accessed 18 March, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

that we will not tolerate their use.”¹¹⁹ Another right intention argument found in the address could also support national interest and is related to United States’ allies in the Syria region. In discussing the potential proliferation of chemical weapons, President Obama states that “these weapons could threaten allies like Turkey, Jordan, and Israel,” and in outlining a potentiality of inaction, the president warns that prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction, namely nuclear weapons, would be weakened.¹²⁰ Right intention is thus strongly supported in President Obama’s 10 September, 2013 address to the nation.

Was last resort invoked? Since the United States did not take offensive military action in Syria in 2013, it is not surprising that there is no mention of the United States being forced to act or having no choice as seen in other cases in this study. In fact, last resort factors in the president’s argument for not taking action, despite the strengths of the previously discussed arguments for justified action. Obama states that “[o]ver the last two years, my administration has tried diplomacy and sanctions, warning and negotiations — but chemical weapons were still used by the Assad regime.”¹²¹ This sets up like a classic last resort argument, but the president follows with a description of the positive talks with President Putin of Russia where the Russian government agreed to “join with the international community in pushing Assad to give up his chemical weapons.”¹²² President Obama further states that “this initiative has the potential to remove the threat of chemical weapons without the use of force” and informs the nation that he “asked the leaders of Congress to postpone a vote to authorize the use of force while we pursue this diplomatic path.”¹²³ Last resort, in this case, is argued for in one instance but ultimately used as justification for not taking action, as there was still the possibility of a diplomatic solution.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Barack Obama, “Address to the Nation on Syria,” 10 September, 2013, accessed 18 March, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

Was the harm from war judged not disproportionate to the good? Proportion, given the president's decision to hold off on a military strike, does not figure heavily in the Syria discourse. A proportion argument does come into play when President Obama addresses critics in congress that favored a more aggressive response. The President answers that criticism in saying that “[e]ven a limited strike will send a message to Assad that no other nation can deliver.”¹²⁴ Obama mentions “open-ended action like Iraq or Afghanistan,” “prolonged air campaign[s] like Libya or Kosovo,” and asserts that “I don’t think we should remove another dictator with force.”¹²⁵ All of these examples are used to support the choice for a targeted, limited strike, even though the president did not authorize one in this case.

Assessment

In applying Just War Theory to the Syria case, all five of the jus ad bellum principles are supported by President Obama’s address. The arguments used for each of the principles are in line with the just war tradition, and are actually stronger, more robust, and use actual just war tradition lexicon when compared with previous cases in this study. The last resort argument, while having sufficient support for action in regard to two years of unsuccessful diplomacy, ultimately serves as the president’s fundamental justification for not ordering military action because there was a new turn of events on the diplomatic front that could lead to a peaceful outcome. As stated in the Iraq War case, not all alternatives need to be tried and fail before action can be taken, but in this case the president decided that the possibility of a diplomatic outcome outweighed the strength of all the arguments in support of the other principles. Last resort, in President Obama’s determination, was not supported.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Barack Obama, “Address to the Nation on Syria,” 10 September, 2013, accessed 18 March, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

Summary

The Syria case provides answers to all of the research questions. National security interest and national interest are both strongly supported in the address, and the *jus ad bellum* principles are all present as well. President Obama explicitly uses some of the lexicon of just cause, and ultimately uses a last resort argument to justify inaction. Proportion is the most weakly developed principle in the address, but that is most likely a result of the decision not to order a strike. Given the arguments for the other principles, it is a reasonable assumption that had President Obama ordered a military strike, the proportion argument would have factored more heavily into the discourse. This case, as a least likely case, features surprisingly strong arguments for action when compared to the other cases in this study and provides valuable data for analysis.

Analysis and Findings

This section has two components, an analysis section and a findings section. The analysis section will describe the linkages among the different case studies and show how over the time period of the cases selected, presidential discourse prior to conflict has undergone change. The findings section will show if and how the three hypotheses for this study are supported by the different case studies. Additionally, the findings section will draw out the implications of the supported hypotheses and the derived meaning for how US presidents have justified military action or inaction in regard to the case studies.

Analysis

In cases of intervention and non-intervention, US presidents make strong arguments for national interest. The Grenada, Bosnia, and Syria cases in this study all suggest that when US presidents want to apply minimal force, read as small numbers of troops, or no force at all, they justify their decision with strong arguments of national interest. When US presidents want to apply large numbers of forces, as in both wars in Iraq, the national interest argument is secondary to other arguments, namely morality arguments with different emphasis placed on different principles from the just war tradition.

Arguments for the national security interests of the United States vary greatly between intervention, war, and non-intervention in no discernible manner. Therefore, when US presidents justify intervention and war, national security interests may or may not be cited and it will be largely situationally dependent. This implies that, at least since 1983, the national security interests of the United States have not dominated the presidential discourse when committing military forces to action. The one case of inaction, Syria, suggests that when a US president faces a situation where there are strong arguments and proponents for action, but his decision is not to act, he needs to acknowledge the national security interest at stake, and then provide another justification as to why that interest is not the most compelling for the decision at hand.

All of the cases in this study show that when a US president justifies the use or force, the jus ad bellum principles of the just war tradition will figure into the rhetoric. In the 30 years between the Grenada and Syria cases, the trend has been that US presidents will acknowledge at least three of the principles. Proportion was weakly present, absent, or only referenced in regard to the overwhelming force that the United States would bring to bear if contested until 2003 when President Bush mentioned the harm from war in his address. The Iraq case also shows that arguments of morality, the just war principles for the purpose of this study, have reached a point where they will all figure into the presidential rhetoric. It was the weak arguments for competent authority and just cause that opened the 2003 invasion of Iraq to debate and scrutiny both in the United States and in the international community. Just seven years prior, in 1995, President Clinton simply omitted two of the principles, last resort and proportion, as they either did not apply or did not support his decision.

When US presidents justify the use of military force, the audience can expect to hear a combination of national interest, national security interest, and morality arguments featuring the just war tradition's jus ad bellum principles. Nothing in this study suggests that national interest or national security interest will fade from the rhetoric, but arguments of morality are increasing in refinement, adopting the lexicon of the just war tradition, and will likely be prevalent in future presidential addresses. In the current global environment, when US presidents justify intervention and war, the moral justification will be a given, with national interest and national security interest bolstering the decision where possible.

Findings

Hypothesis one states that US wars and interventions are justified by national interest. The evidence from the case studies suggests that hypothesis one is supported by all five cases, but national interest arguments have different emphasis depending on the case. National interest figured heavily into the Grenada, Bosnia, and Syria cases, but to a low degree in the Gulf War

and Iraq War cases. This means that US presidential rhetoric, in the cases for this study, favors national interest justifications more in cases of minor combat operations, peace enforcement, and non-intervention than in cases of major combat operations. This is logical in that the expectation for justifications for war should favor national security interest over national interest which leads to the second hypothesis.

Hypothesis two states that US wars and interventions are justified by national security interest. The evidence from the case studies suggests that hypothesis two is partly supported. Hypothesis two is partly supported because four of the five cases feature varying degrees of national security interest arguments, but surprisingly, the Gulf War case does not make an overt argument for it. The strongest national security interest argument actually comes from the one least likely case, Syria, where the result was non-intervention. This means that, in regard to national security interest, for the cases used in this study, no clear pattern emerges. Presidential rhetoric, for the cases in this study, does not appear to favor national security interest as a primary justification for US wars and interventions, a finding that is counterintuitive. The fact that four of the five cases do feature some type of national security interest argument means that US presidents do try and make linkages where possible, but the preponderance of their arguments are coming from somewhere else, which leads to the third hypothesis.

Hypothesis three states that Just War Theory provides US presidents with a convenient means to justify war and armed intervention. The evidence from the case studies suggests that hypothesis three is supported. All five case studies feature arguments for at least three of five *jus ad bellum* principles of the just war tradition. In the Gulf War case, where a national security interest argument was not present, there were very strong arguments for right intention and last resort, and as previously stated, the just cause argument in the case has become exemplary. In looking at the cases temporally, just war tradition lexicon started to appear in the 2003 Iraq War case, and figured consistently in President Obama's 2013 address on Syria. The most contentious

case in the study is the Iraq War case, and while the arguments for competent authority and just cause were not very clean and open to debate, the presence of those arguments indicates a conscious effort on the part of the president to account for them when justifying US military action. The triumph of the just war tradition appears in the Syria case, where despite very strong arguments of national interest and national security interest, ultimately the just war principle of last resort afforded President Obama with justification for non-intervention. This means that in the cases addressed in this study, the just war tradition has been complementary to arguments for national interest and national security interest, and ultimately provided flexibility to US presidents to justify military action even when ties to national interest or national security interest were not predominant. Morality appears to be the emergent predominant theme in justifying US military action or inaction to the public and the world.

The case studies used to provide answers to the seven research questions resulted in support for hypotheses one and three, that US wars and Interventions are justified by national interest and that Just War Theory provides US presidents with a convenient means to justify war and armed intervention. Hypothesis two, that US wars and interventions are justified by national security interest, was only partly supported due to the absence of a strong argument for it in the 1991 Gulf War Case, the varying degrees with which national security interest arguments figured into the different case studies, and the fact that the strongest national security interest argument was in the Syria case where there was no US war or intervention. A summary of the case study findings is depicted in Table 1 below.

	Grenada 1983	Gulf War 1991	Bosnia 1995	Iraq War 2003	Syria 2013
Type	Minor Combat Operation	Major Combat Operation	Peace Enforcement	Major Combat Operation	Non-Intervention
National Security Interest	Yes (moderate)	No	Yes (low)	Yes (moderate)	Yes (high)
National Interest	Yes (high)	Yes (low)	Yes (high)	Yes (low)	Yes (high)
Just War Principles	4/5	5/5	3/5	5/5	5/5
Competent Authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Just Cause	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Right Intention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Last Resort	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Proportion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comments	proportion weak/absent	just cause exemplary, right intention, last resort dominant	last resort, proportion absent	comp auth, just cause not clean	last resort used to justify non-intervention

Table 1: Summary of Case Study Findings

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons given by US presidents prior to US military intervention and war during the last five administrations. A review of the literature suggested that a comprehensive examination of this sort had not yet been conducted and might have yielded new insights into correlations between presidential discourse and military performance and execution. This study, in showing what was said and done by US presidents in the past, hoped to give way to a better awareness and dialogue between the civilian command authority and military leaders prior to the decision to commit US forces in support of policy objectives worldwide.

Seven questions were used to gather the empirical evidence to test three hypotheses by applying them to case studies of US war and intervention from Grenada to Syria. The first two questions applied to each case study was what the national security interests or national interests were. The remaining five questions related to the five just ad bellum principles of the just war tradition. In each case, we asked what the competent authority, just cause, and right intention

were, whether or not last resort was invoked, and finally if the harm from war was judged not disproportionate to the good achieved. All of the questions were answered using the words of US presidents in their public addresses prior to conflict.

The thesis guiding this study was that from Grenada to Syria, in the absence of true national security threats, US presidents have used the principles of Just War Theory in varying degrees to justify US military intervention and war to the American public and the world. This thesis is partly supported in that US presidents have in fact used the principles of Just War theory to justify action in the studied time period, but the use of arguments for national security interest and national interest were more prevalent in the discourse than originally assumed. The case studies support the use of the principles of Just War Theory in varying degrees, and even show their increased use over time. The incorporation of national security interest and national interest in the main thesis would make it stronger and better support the interplay discovered and expounded upon in the analysis and findings.

This study relied on case study methodology. Multiple cases were used because the evidence was delimited to presidential public addresses prior to US conflict. The use of a single case, while allowing for more depth of research, would have limited the ability for analysis of trends over time. The timeframe of Grenada to Syria allowed case selection from five different presidential administrations. The primary goal of this study was to test the research questions related to justifications of national security interest, national interest, or just war principles for US war and intervention. The method of analysis was structured focused comparison. In this study, the method was structured in that the same questions were applied to each case study. In applying the same questions to each case, the data could be structured and form the basis for comparison between the findings. The method in this study was focused because only the justifications for war or intervention as given in presidential addresses provided the answers to the research questions.

This study is significant to military leaders, and by extension, the operational planners within the military. This study is also significant to national security professionals and scholars of the just war tradition. Military leaders and planners will gather from this study that the presidential discourse prior to conflict will not necessarily lay out clear objectives around which to formulate a plan for military action. With presidential discourse trending to favor arguments of morality and the just war principles as justification for armed intervention and war, it will be necessary for military leaders to have open dialogue with the civilian leadership in order to accurately define and develop a plan to achieve a desired strategic outcome. As shown in the Grenada and Gulf War cases, US presidents set clear objectives for the missions which assisted military leaders in delivering the desired outcome. The Bosnia and Iraq War cases did not have as clearly defined objectives and resulted in two decade-long US commitments. Scholars of the just war tradition will see through this study how the tradition has increasingly become imbedded in presidential discourse prior to conflict and figures heavily into how presidents try to justify US war and intervention.

This study only looked at five of ten potential US case studies for the time period. The addition of more cases will most likely assist in better analysis of trends during the time period and multiple cases from one president could possibly show different interrelationships between national security interest, national interest, and the just war principles depending on the situation. In this study, only one case looked at an example where US military intervention and war did not occur. The addition of other cases of inaction could be insightful to determine whether the same strength of arguments in the Syria case exist in others. Expanding the scope of the study to look at presidential discourse further back in time could possibly show a clearer transition from arguments of national security interest and national interest to the introduction of elements of the just war tradition in presidential discourse prior to conflict. Finally, expanding the scope of the cases to speeches given by leaders of other nations during the same time period could illuminate

how they have justified their own decisions for intervention and war and to what degree arguments for national security interest, national interest, or the principles of the just war tradition figure in their discourse as well.

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